

“Galatians Review”

Christian Liberty

Galatians 5:1-26

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December 30, 2016

Bruce: Gracious heavenly Father, it is with a great sense of awe and anticipation that we sit at Your feet this morning once again. You are so faithful that Your mercies are fresh every morning. And we know that the mercies we will receive today will be different than the ones received yesterday, and we anticipate the ones we will receive tomorrow. And now, Father, we just pray that You would open our eyes, that we might behold You in all of Your glory for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: I hope you’ll bear with me today, men. I’ve been in bed the last four days. So I’ve got my concoction here of Burners ginger ale, Halls cough drops, tissue paper and my glasses. (*Laughter*) I trust that the Lord will be pleased to give us the grace that is needed.

Turn with me in your Bibles, please, to Galatians chapter five. I want to do something different today. I got the idea from William Hendrickson, a theologian. The Puritans, when they taught the Scripture, always started with doctrine first. They gave their doctrine. Then they gave their applications. And then they gave questions, and then they gave what they would call uses. Here is how you can use this particular Scripture that they would teach us. So they would always start with doctrine. Then they would go to application. Then they would go to uses.

What we’re going to do today is something different. We haven’t done this before. But I kind of had fun doing it. Go to Galatians chapter five. I’m going to give us a practical use for every one of those twenty-six verses, because Galatians chapter five is where we have spent the most time the last couple of months, especially since we’ve looked at the fruit of the Spirit. And I think that it really is very, very helpful for us to take a look in summary at Galatians chapter five.

Now if you look at your handout, you’ll notice in the outline I gave you at the very start of the book of Galatians, you’ll notice in Galatians chapter five and six that it talks about application, how the Christian is to live. What I want to do today is to give us some practical principles of application that we can use in each one of these verses. So what I’m going to do is that I’m just going to read the whole passage. I’m going to read one verse at a time and then give you a use of that particular verse. And may God be pleased to direct us in this way of studying today. And I trust that it will be helpful for us to review what we’ve learned from Galatians chapter five.

Chapter five, verse one. “*For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore, and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.*” My use would be this. Freedom is a precious gift. But it is also an enormous responsibility. The word *responsibility* means knowing and doing what’s expected of you. That’s what the book of Galatians tells us—what we need to do in Christian liberty. It tells us exactly what we need to know and how we need to be responsible.

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A responsible person is a person who can respond. He's able to respond; he's responsible. And so we can read this. Freedom is a precious gift, but also an immense responsibility. May we have the right response for God's glory.

Verse 2. *“Look! I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision Christ will be of no advantage to you.”* I would offer this for your consideration. Christ is either our complete Savior or He's not our Savior at all. You don't cut Jesus up into parts and say, “I'll take this part of Him and the other part of Him I'm not going to accept.” He's either going to be our complete Savior, or He's not going to be our Savior at all. That's essentially what Paul is teaching us in verse 2.

If you accept circumcision, then Christ will be of no advantage to you. You can't cut Christ up in pieces and accept what you want and reject the other part. You either accept Him the way He is or you don't accept Him at all.

Verse 3. *“I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.”* My point of application would be this. Whoever would be saved by works must render perfect obedience to the entire law. Nothing less will do. If you're going to work for your salvation and be justified by the law, then you're going to have to keep all the law without exception. Can one do that? No, one cannot do that. But if that's your case, whoever would be saved by works must render perfect obedience to the entire law. Nothing else will do.

Verse 4. *“You are severed then from Christ, you who would be justified by the law. You have fallen away from grace.”* Trusting our good works indicates one who has fallen from the sphere of grace.

Now this is not talking about losing your salvation, as some people would suggest. Remember, the contrast here is a life of liberty versus a life of law. So the contrast is liberty versus law, not your salvation. Really, what the context of that verse means is that if somebody does that he has lost the sphere of grace. They're outside the sphere of grace. But it does not mean that you lose your salvation. Other people would take that verse out of context and say that you can lose your salvation because it says that you've fallen from grace. That is not what Paul is teaching. He's teaching that you've fallen from the sphere of grace. That is the way we can look at that.

Verse #5. *“For through the Spirit by faith we ourselves eagerly await for the hope of righteousness.”* My principle would be this. For the true believer, the best is yet to come.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And doesn't that give us great hope in the midst of this world? In the midst of all the troubles that are going on in this world, all the divisions about peace and all the other things, for us who follow Christ and are true believers, the best is yet to be.

Verse #6. *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”* I think we could design this principle here in verse number six. Faith without love is not true faith at all.

Verse 7. *“You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?”* My application would be stay on course. Don't run outside the limits. Stay on the track. Stay on course.

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“*You were running well. Who hindered you?*” Make sure that those people don’t hinder us and that we stay on course.

Verse #8. “*This persuasion is not from Him who calls you.*” I would offer this for our consideration applicationally. Consider the source when anyone tries and urges you to do something which is morally or spiritually questionable. Consider the source. That is what verse eight says.

“This persuasion.” A lot of times people are persuaded by nice things that come down the Christian pike. We have to be very, very careful. So consider the source whenever someone tries to urge you to do something that is spiritually or morally questionable. Consider the source.

Verse #9. “*A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*” Now this is one of my favorite expressions from my Puritan friends. “An evil intention if unchecked leads to a shameful deed. A shameful deed if not repented of becomes a bad habit. A bad habit if not discarded will grow into a depraved character. A depraved character leads to hell.”

Participant: Could you read that again, please?

Bruce: Certainly. “*A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*” “An evil intention if unchecked leads to a shameful deed. A shameful deed if not repented of becomes a bad habit. A bad habit if not discarded will grow into a depraved character. A depraved character leads to perdition or hell.”

Now contrast that with what I’ve said before. Thoughts become your words. Words become your habits. Habits become your character. Character becomes your destiny. That’s the outset of this. We have to be very, very careful of who we associate with because “*a little leaven leavens the whole lump.*”

Verse #10. “*I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine. And the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.*” For verse ten I would suggest this. Be careful whom you trust.

If you recall in our previous study of verse ten, “*I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine. And the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.*” Friends, we just have to be careful who we trust.

Verse 11. “*For brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.*” The message of the cross is offensive. We need to realize that the message of the cross is offensive. That doesn’t mean that we back down from preaching it. We just have to realize that the source of all ministry is God Himself. With the ministry that He ordains, He’s the source, He’s the reason and He’s the result. He’s the source of all ministry. He’s the ordination of all ministry. The source, the reason for it and the result all comes from God. And we have to realize that the message that we preach—Christ and Him crucified—is an offensive message to the nonbeliever and to the world.

We should never run out of things to preach about because the Scripture says to preach Christ and Him crucified. That means three things. We need to preach the *Person* of the cross. We need to preach the *reason* for the cross. And we need to preach the *power* of the cross. But that message will be an offense to a lost world.

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Verse 12. *“I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves.”* The devil does not persecute those whom he has already captured.

Verse 13. How are we doing on this? Is it making any sense? I’m just trying to give some personal application of the truth, as I was thinking on this for the past couple of weeks about this series we’ve been studying in Galatians five.

Verse 13. *“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. But through love serve one another.”* True liberty is not the privilege to do whatever one’s evil heart desires. But it is the Spirit-imparted ability and desire to do what one should do.

The key phrase for me would be “Spirit-imparted ability and desire.” God gives us the desire and the ability. He gives us the will to be willing. True liberty is not the privilege to do whatever one’s evil heart desires to do. But it is the Spirit-imparted ability and desire to do what one should do. There is freedom in Christ—a Spirit-imparted ability and desire to do it.

Verse 14. *“For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”* The Christian’s law is love.

Verse 15. It’s interesting that verse 15 follows right after verse 14 in its context. *“But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.”* Right after he says that the Christian’s law is love, he says, “Don’t be biters in the way you talk to one another.”

Bitter words harm the biter as well as the one bitten. They tend to destroy the fellowship. Bitter words harm the biter—the one who speaks the words—as well as the one bitten, the one who hears the words. They tend to destroy the fellowship.

Verse 16. *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”* Consider this. We can overcome evil with good.

Verse 17. *“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”* Satan has what I would call a filthy reservoir in our hearts. But the Holy Spirit also resides there. That’s the conflict. You see, Satan has a filthy reservoir in our hearts. But the Holy Spirit also resides there by our regeneration. And as a result, there’s the conflict. Which reservoir are you going to tap?, the filthy reservoir of one side of your heart, or the Spirit-filled ability to do what God would have us do by the Holy Spirit? That’s our conflict, men? And we need to realize that it’s a daily conflict until the Lord takes us home to glory.

How about verse 18? *“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”* A person enjoys true freedom when the Holy Spirit has taken the helm of the ship of his life, which bears him over the troubled sea of life.

Somebody told me the other day the phrase “God is my copilot.” Then you’re in the wrong seat. *(Laughter)* If He’s your copilot, you’re in the wrong seat. He’s the pilot.

Verse 19. *“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality.”* Let me read that and verse 20 also. Well, I’ll keep it the way it is.

What the world has often called sickness is by Scripture called “obvious works of the flesh.”

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Verse 20. *“Idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions.”* I think we can learn from that that we should practice self-denial, not self-indulgence.

Verse 21. *“Envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these. And I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

I think what we can learn from this, men, is this: that private sins—the ones that nobody sees, such as jealousy and envy—are not any better than public sins, such as drinking bouts and rivalries and drunkenness. How often do we only look at the visible sins, the public sins? And how often do we hear from the pulpit talk about greed, jealousy, envy, those types of private sins? We make a distinction between that which is private—sins of the spirit—versus sins of the flesh. And those private sins are really no better than the sins of the flesh.

Verse 22. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.”* Love heads the list of these fruit virtues. The others are expressions of love.

Last week I read for you what Bishop Rodgers gave me from Donald Gray Barnhouse. Let me read that again. My application is that in verse 22 love heads the list of the fruit virtues. The others are expressions of love.

Here is how Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse expresses this. “Love is the key. Joy is love singing. Peace is love resting. Long-suffering is love enduring. Kindness is love’s touch. Goodness is love’s character. Faithfulness is love’s habit. Gentleness is love’s self-forgetfulness. And self-control is love holding the reins.”

Love heads the list. The others are just expressions of what love is, really manifested by a true believer who is led by the Spirit.

Remember that the word *fruit* is singular. This is not a series of things you go looking for. It’s a description of what love really is in the nine descriptions of those virtues.

Verse 23. *“Gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

The true Christian is loyal to his God, gentle to his neighbor, and has himself under control. All this is a result of God’s grace.

Verse 24. *“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* What we can learn from this, men, would be this. Be in practice what you have confessed to be in principle. In other words, you say these things. Practice the things that you say.

That’s why I wanted to do this, to give us an application for each one of these particular verses, so that we would understand what it means to be in practice what you say you confess. And we do that in principle.

Verse 25. *“If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit.”* We derive our strength from the Holy Spirit. But don’t look for it in yourself.

How often do we think that we can make a difference? How often do we think that we have enough strength to do it, that we can handle that situation? If the Holy Spirit is leading us, if He is the source of our power, we should not go looking for the power in ourselves, but trust Him for it with the Spirit-enabled and gifted strength that God gives us. Don’t go looking for it in yourself.

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Verse #26. “*Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*” Rude assertions are an offense to God. Rude self-assertion is displeasing to the Lord. Don’t become conceited, provoking one another with rude self-assertion, thinking that I can make the difference. It’s an offense to the Lord.

Now let me read you a couple of other things from some of my research and some of my study over the last couple of months. First of all, any questions on any of that? Yes, Don?

Don: I’ll just point out that not only in verse 19, when you said that the world calls sickness the Bible calls sin, that not only does the world call it sickness, but an alternate lifestyle.

Bruce: Yes. Interesting; they use the words “alternate lifestyle.” Actually, who has the alternate lifestyle? We do, because it’s not the style of living of this world. Any other questions on that? Yes?

Participant: A couple weeks ago I mentioned to you that some people could look at this chapter as a list of dos and don’ts.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Participant: Even though Paul warns that if we live by the Spirit, we’re not under the law. Sometimes we can forget what Jesus said in John 15. “*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, then you will bear much fruit.*” We say it, but we look at it as a list.

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: It’s not a list. It’s a relationship with Christ.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: It’s abiding in Him.

Bruce: It produces fruit. That’s why *fruit* is a singular word. It’s not plural. It’s not a list of things. It’s an expression of our abiding with Christ.

Remember that the word *abide* is the word *meno*, which means to pitch your tent and feel at home with. When you and I abide in Christ, we pitch our tent with Him and feel at home with Him. The result is fruit because we’re abiding in Him. Thanks, Bill.

The fruitless Christian is not a failed Christian, but a false one. In other words, he’s not a Christian at all. You have to look at yourself and say, “Is fruit being borne by my abiding in Christ?” Yes?

Participant: I think that there’s a tendency to be like a Pharisee and try to create fruit and invent fruit. And the comment you just made is don’t do fruit, do character. If you work on your character and allow Christ to dwell in you, and you fall under the submission of the Holy Spirit, He’ll work on your character. And as a result of your character, the fruit will follow. So I think that oftentimes we look for the wrong results.

Bruce: Fruit is a consequence, not a goal. Yes, please?

Participant: As you went through the fruit of the Spirit, I was thinking that this is what distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever.

Bruce: That’s right.

Participant: Because while the unbeliever can love, he loves only in a very specific way, whether it be erotic or whatever.

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Bruce: Right.

Participant: But the fruit of the Spirit evidences the transformed life.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: We couldn't manifest that in our own strength. You know, you take that fruit singular, and then you see all these things happening to one degree or another, we're not perfect. But we see these things taking place—gentleness, self-control, all at once. This is not a love that the world can manufacture.

Bruce: As I mentioned last week, seeing fruit in your life is an indication of two major things, one for yourself and one for the world. When you see fruit, such as we've described in Galatians chapter five, it gives you the assurance of your salvation because God is residing in you. And He is the One who is producing the fruit, the Spirit-gifted ability and willingness. So the first thing is that it gives you a degree of the sense of the assurance of your salvation.

And the second thing is that for the world it gives an indication where God is residing, because where is God residing? In us. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. He's residing in us. And the world begins to see where God resides, and that's with us, if we're true followers of Christ. There's great assurance and great indication of the presence of God when we see fruit in our lives which is produced by the Holy Spirit, not manufactured in us by a list of dos and don'ts, but by the Spirit-gifted ability of God leading us. Yes, Mike?

Mike: Bill brought up John 15, abiding in Christ and bear much fruit. I've heard a lot of sermons over the years preached that you're going to bear fruit, and that means to go out and lead people to Christ, and do this and do this and do that. *(Laughter)* And my thoughts have been that that's directly tied to what we're reading right now in Galatians five. What are your thoughts on that?

Bruce: We don't go out and do anything.

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: We can't make a difference. When we're led by the Spirit, fruit is the result. God is the One who ordains ministry for us.

Go to 2 Corinthians 4:1. *“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.”* Would somebody read that same verse from the NIV?

Participant: *“Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.”*

Bruce: That's where we get the idea that we're motivated by mercy. Ministry is something that God mercifully lets us participate in. We don't go out and do it. *“Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry.”* Any ministry that you and I have is a function of God's mercy. Ministry is not the result of human achievement. It's the consequence of divine mercy. It's not the result of human achievement. It's the consequence of divine mercy.

So we have to understand this. When God ordains ministry for us, He's not only the source of the ministry. He's the reason for the ministry and He's also the result of the ministry. That's because He's merciful to us and lets us participate with Him. Yes?

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Participant: Going back to Galatians five, in Luther’s commentary on Galatians I came across his explanation of “through faith we look forward to this hope of our righteousness.” He talks about the relationship and difference between faith and hope. And it’s like what you’re saying, Bruce. It’s like the Holy Spirit is our coach. He gives us the game plan, which is our faith. But then He also gives us this great half time encouragement, which is our hope that we can go forward. And tying those together it just makes so much sense. And we forget about this a lot of times.

Bruce: The word *hope* literally means constant expectation that will occur.

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: Confident expectation. Thanks, Tom.

Tom: It’s not us. It’s what He’s doing in us.

Bruce: Amen. Yes, please?

Participant: Yes, in verse six, “*for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor non-circumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*” Now that would come to me, and I hear “good good work.” And then I hear “Christ works in this way through me.” It’s hard to reject other people when Christ’s life is displayed through me. Yet the way I treat other people, and my respect and being Christlike is going to be displayed through them. It’s Christ on display, not what I expect Christ to be doing in their lives.

Bruce: Right. Now notice. Go back to 4:1 of 2 Corinthians again. You brought up the second point of this verse. “*We do not lose heart.*” Why is it that we’re patient? Why is it that we’re consistent? Why is it that we persevere? Why is it that we don’t give up?

The words *lose heart* mean discouragement of mind and heart. We don’t get discouraged. That’s why Christian people are the most persevering, because we understand this. In view of God’s mercy we have this ministry, and we do not give up.

That means that you’re not expecting a certain result when you do something, and you get discouraged when you don’t see it. Remember who the author of ministry is.

Participant: Jesus.

Bruce: God Himself is. He’s the source of the ministry, He’s the reason for the ministry and He is the result of it. Therefore we don’t get discouraged when we don’t see the result we would like, because we understand this. God is the result of the ministry. We have that faith. That’s our hope. We have the confident expectation that what will happen will occur, and that’s up to Him. Yes, Ted?

Ted: “Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.”

Bruce: Amen. Author and Perfecter. It’s important to know both of those words.

Here’s a statement from John Wesley. “*Without the Holy Spirit we do nothing but add sin to sin.*”

Thomas Brooks, the Puritan, said, “*Duty makes us do things well, but love makes us do them beautifully. It is impossible to give without loving, but it is impossible to love without giving.*” The law of Christ is love. Yes, Bill?

Bill: I think that when you get to that point of selfishness, and you look upon what the Lord is asking us to do, it’s sacrifice. And it’s hard.

Bruce: It is, isn’t it?

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Bill: That’s when it irritates us. We don’t want to give up.

Bruce: What’s Jesus’ definition of a disciple? *“If you want to come after Me, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me.”* Three words—self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-submission. That’s how Jesus defined a disciple.

Richard Sibbs, the Puritan, said this about Galatians five. *“No man can love a saint as a saint but a saint.”* Yes?

Participant: This is the beautiful rub of Scripture. You see, we only say, *“Character is character and being is abiding.”* But then if you go back to Galatians 5:17, it talks about the desires of the flesh against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. That last line is yes, abide in the Spirit, but guess what? You’re going to have to fight to not do what you want to do in the power of the Spirit. So it’s *be*, but then it’s also that *doing* part, that we have to be intentional, intentional to love like you said, Kerry, loving that person, that is, to be loving because we’re intentionally loving and intentionally serving, because we have the fruit of the Spirit. *(Unclear)*

Bruce: It is the rub. *“Holy joy is the oil to the wheels of obedience.”* I’m just looking at some things I’ve written down here.

“The seeming joy that a sinner has is not from the knowledge of his happiness, but from the ignorance of his danger.” They’re just ignorant of their danger.

Participant: Say that one more time.

Bruce: *“The seeming joy that a sinner has is not from the knowledge of his happiness, but from the ignorance of his danger.”* He’s just ignorant of the danger that he’s in by not being a follower of Christ.

“Kindness is the language the deaf can hear and the blind can see.” *“He is too busy who is too busy to be kind.”*

Men, I’m just trying to give you some things to think about, as we learn these wonderful doctrines of Scripture and the freedom we have in Christ. And what are we doing about it? What am I going to do about what I’ve just learned? That’s why OI wanted to go through these things, just to get some handles on some things that we can do about what we’ve just learned. I mean that we do them under the Spirit-gifted ability of the Holy Spirit. Remember, I’m not saying that we are looking to our own strength. I’m not saying that this is a list of dos and don’ts. All I’m saying is apply what you learn. *“Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only.”* We need to do the Word, apply the Word, not just listen to it. Learning should not stop at knowledge but should lead to living. And living should lead to loving.

“Faithfulness is most difficult when it is most necessary.” When it’s the most difficult, that’s when it’s the most necessary.

“Meekness is the mark of a man who has been mastered by God.” And one more for us. *“Death is half disarmed when the interests and the pleasures of the flesh are first controlled.”*

Well men, I thank you for bearing with me on this. I just wanted to give you some things to think about, some principles that we can apply. I trust that the Lord will give us the grace to do that. Remember, don’t go looking to do this yourself in your own strength.

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Participant: There you go. Amen.

Bruce: If the Holy Spirit is our strength source, don't go looking for it from yourself. We just don't have what it takes.

Let's just pray now, men, as we close. Father, You've given us much in this fifth chapter in the book of Galatians—the fact that we've been set free from the control of our own sinful nature. We can understand liberty in Christ, freedom in Christ. Father, it's a great, great blessing we have, but it's also a tremendous responsibility. We pray, Lord, that You would apply the truths that we've learned today to be visible evidence not only of our conversion to Christ, but also that the Lord has taken up His residency. If we've said anything, Lord, that's not consistent with who You are in all of Your glory and Your grace, we pray that You would remove it from our minds, and that we would only remember those things that are consistent with Your Scripture. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!”

Participant: Thank You, Bruce. (*Applause*)